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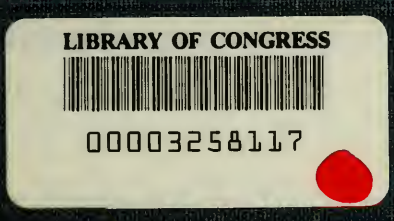

June 30

With best wishes to a fellow Californian — E. K. Rand

TWO AMERICAN RETROSPECTS

EDWARD KENNARD RAND

(Phi Beta Kappa Address at Stanford University, June 19, 1920
Reprinted from the Chapter Proceedings)

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TWO AMERICAN RETROSPECTS

Edward Kennard Rand

The periods of human history, though clearly defined in their intellectual tendencies and temperamental traits as we look back over the past, generally merge their boundary lines. As in the natural world, it is hard to tell where one species of civilization ends and another begins. Who can put his finger on the precise moment when the Middle Ages started their course, and when they gave place to the Renaissance? Still less could the dwellers in those ages discern the transition from one period into another. No bell rang to apprise them of the passing of the old and the incoming of the new. They were not even aware of their characteristic colorings. Men of the Middle Ages did not know that they were "middle." They coined the word *modernus* and were doubtless impressed, first of all, with the sense of their own modernity. They had their moments of conscious pride in contemporary achievement, or they lamented the vanished virtues of a distant Golden Age, or they cherished rosy dreams of a coming millenium, as has ever been done since time began. The ages glide on from year to year unaware of their nature, which does not stand out till later generations see it in perspective, as part of the general vista of time.

Yet there are cataclysms in history as in nature, sudden and decisive events that cut like a knife across our steady development or our slow decline, and mark it into periods. On August 1, 1914, we knew not merely that a European war was on, but that a great betrayal of our human trust had taken place, that a powerful nation, blinded with its own importance, had broken its pledges, attacked its neighbors and proclaimed the appointed day when its victorious troops should dictate German culture to the world. That was, indeed, a new epoch. From the universal turmoil into which the nations, one by one, were drawn, we looked back

on the preceding decades as on another world. We found consolation in the thought that though the night was black with a barbaric war and the yet more awful fear of a barbaric peace, it had been our fortune once upon a time to live in a Golden Age. For all that, when our own national duty called at last in a voice without reply and we rose to the call as one man, when self-denial and simplicity of living were normal and all our acts were harmonized by a righteous purpose and a firm resolve, those were the days that we called another Golden Age and again thanked our stars that we had been vouchsafed that great experience. On *that* period, brief but large, we may now look back, with longing and with bitterness of soul. For its heroism, its unity, its glimpse of a not too distant goal, have passed. In their place are selfish dissensions, unstrung morale and the apparent defeat of a great political hope. It is a moment of profound disenchantment.

If the immediate present is black with discouragement, the members of this illustrious society of Phi Beta Kappa, who are embarked on that voyage whose pilot is philosophy, will best find consolation by a survey of the past and a new analysis of our hopes on the basis of what in similar periods of history, man has struggled to attain and partly lost and partly found. We will lift up our eyes to the ancestral hills, for thence cometh our help. And in particular, I will invite you to look back this afternoon on the years that followed the American Revolution, to see if they contain some cheering reflection, or even some prophecy of the ultimate lifting of the clouds of our present dismay. We will take this earlier retrospect in the company of several contemporary observers of those times. The first is a writer not known by name, whose work, entitled "An Historical Journal of the American War," was published in the Massachusetts Historical Collections for the year 1793. This account, declare the editors, was prepared "by a gentleman of information and judgment." It is not, of course, a complete history of the Revolutionary War; contemporary accounts cannot be complete. But they have the unique value of letting us feel

the pulse of the times. It is worth our while to note the temper of an intelligent and cultivated citizen, writing, ten years after peace had been declared, a summary of the mighty struggle of which he had been an eye-witness.

There are many passages in this record that *mutatis mutandis* might have been written during our recent war. There is the conviction throughout that the cause of the colonies is unquestionably just. There is the same detestation of a foe who does not shrink from ungentlemanly warfare and the systematic resort to *Schrecklichkeiten,* of which most, it seems, were the work of Indian savages and Hessian hirelings. Says Governor Livingston of the conduct of the royal forces in New Jersey, where the Hessians were active: "They have plundered friends and foes; effects capable of division, they have divided; such as were not, they have destroyed; they have warred upon decrepid old age, warred upon defenseless youth; they have committed hostilities against the professors of literature, and the ministers of religion, against publick records and private monuments, books of improvements and papers of curiosity; and against the arts and sciences. They have butchered the wounded asking for quarter, mangled the dead weltering in their blood, refused to the dead the rites of sepulchre, suffered prisoners to perish for want of sustenance; violated the chastity of women, disfigured private dwellings of taste and elegance; and in the rage of impiety and barbarism, profaned edifices dedicated to Almighty God." I could multiply repulsive stories of outrages that would remind you of the reports—some true, some false—that spread with the invasion of Belgium. The effects of war, as General Sherman intimated, are not pleasant. One party would have it that the most terrible war is the most humane, because the shortest. But our ancestors believed rather that the awful game has its rules and that gentlemen should mind them.

What we have learned to call propaganda, the attack on the psychology of a people, an art which Germany in the recent war developed with scientific elaboration and applied

with childish stupidity, was, of course, in its infancy in the days of our ancestors. Lord Howe tried at the outset to hold out the inducement of pardon to any who laid down arms, but few sought this dubious shelter. One dastardly move was the attempt on the part of the British to ruin the Continental currency, already in a pitiable condition, by the manufacture of counterfeit money. A final effort was made at the close of the war to induce the States to conclude a separate peace apart from their ally France; but they remained loyal to their trust.

Within our forces, there were the usual bickerings and dissensions. Poor humanity cannot work, it would seem, in any other way. I often thought during the war that if the animosities engendered in patriotic committees of good men and women could only be concentrated on the front, the Boche would not long have held out. Nor was the Continental Army altogether a unit. General Washington was embarrassed with petty criticisms, omniscient suggestions, and the jealousies of officers associated with him in command.

There were pacifists in those days, too. "Congress," says our author, "were apprehensive that the royal army would pay a visit to Philadelphia, and taking into consideration the religious tenets of a great many of the inhabitants denominated Quakers, which would not allow of their taking up arms, and which had been a great clog to the military operations of the Pennsylvanians—they judged it proper to lay before the people the hazard that would attend the success of the enemy, and getting into their capital; for this purpose Congress ordered handbills to be struck off"—like our posters—"and circulated through the State, to rouse them to a sense of their danger, and the defense of their property, and to convince the Continent that *one spirit actuated the whole*." "The address," he adds, "had a good effect in the Southern States; they were excited to more vigorous exertions."

With the issuing of paper money the condition of the currency became desperate, and the attempt was made to

finance the war mainly by loans. Our ancestors patriotically went deep into their pockets and gave till it hurt. There came a time, in 1779, when the desperate policy of repudiating the public debt was suggested, and Congress made the following reply: "The pride of America revolts from the idea of violating the publick faith; her citizens know for what purpose these emissions were made; have repeatedly plighted their faith for the redemption of them; *they are to be found in every man's possession, and every man is interested in their being redeemed;*"—this bespeaks a wide subscription to those first Liberty bonds! The result of this new appeal was that hands went down still deeper into pockets and the giving hurt once more. The splendid self-denials of the American people during the recent war were not without precedent. One money-raising device, tried by our ancestors but not, so far as I know, by us, was a lottery. This consisted of four classes, of one hundred thousand tickets, each subject to a deduction at fifteen per cent—at the price of from ten to forty dollars in the several classes. The highest prizes were from ten to fifty thousand dollars, and there was not one blank to a prize. The fortunate adventurers, who should draw more than thirty or forty dollars, in the first, second, and third classes, were to receive a treasury banknote, payable at the end of five years, and an annual interest of four per cent; the drawers of fifty dollars in the fourth class to receive their money immediately. Thus was the subscription to a Liberty Loan combined with a little excitement, involving perhaps a substantial profit, or perhaps a little loss.

Do not imagine that our Hostess Houses and other forms of War Camp Community Service are altogether a recent discovery. The same spirit was manifested, if not in quite the same way, by the ladies of the Revolution. The movement started in Philadelphia, the city of brotherly love. "Some ladies of Philadelphia," our author writes, "set an example to others of their sex, of love to their country, and compassion to their suffering brethren among themselves, and stimulating others to do it, for the purpose of affording

a temporary relief for the troops on service in that vicinity, who were destitute of many necessaries. They were successful in their labours of love, and bestowed on the soldiers their free-will offerings. These are such expressions of kindness and delicate sensations, as ought to be recorded to the honour of the American ladies. It is a pleasing prospect, 'When the men are valiant, and the women kind.'" *Our* soldiers and sailors, as valiant as of yore, will agree that the kindly American women are still true to type.

But I turn to a gloomier side of this contemporary retrospect. You must not be surprised if the profiteer was flourishing like the green bay tree in those days, or if a familiar remedy was suggested to circumvent him. In 1778, our author states, "the prevalence of *monopoly*, and *extortion*, had called the attention of Congress to devise means that had the most probable tendency to suppress those growing evils, and being of opinion that *regulating laws were absolutely necessary*, they divided the thirteen United States into two districts, and recommended to their respective legislatures to appoint a convention to establish a regulation of prices.

"The Eastern districts, *New England*, complied with the recommendation. A convention met at New Haven (Connect.) and formed a plan of regulation; laid it before the legislatures of their respective States; and it being approved by them, was put into practice by almost all the States, excepting *the Massachusetts*. A writer says, 'The Recusants of that State prevented its universal execution.'" But despite our author's censure, many economists today would agree that "the Massachusetts" should be thanked and not censured for delivering the country from a wholesale policy of price-regulation.

Harder to bear than grinding poverty, rising taxes and the general disturbance of finance, was the looming cloud of apprehension as to the outcome of it all. What could be in store for the tiny Continental army, when once the British plans were matured and their full force in operation, but defeat? There are some elements in the early strategy of the war that remind us of the events of the summer of 1914.

It began with a bold but unsuccessful dash on Canada, with the idea of uniting all American possessions of the Crown against the home government. We may compare the gallant and almost inevitable, but strategically unsound, advance of the French into Alsace in the first month of the recent war. The plan adopted by General Washington, as by General Joffre, and by General Fabius before their time, was one detestable to Congressmen and arm-chair strategists, but justified by the results. Washington saw that he was no match for the British in the field, but that by keeping his army intact and waiting for accessions from the militia that had begun to train, he put the hour of a British victory farther and farther off. He had nothing to lose and everything to gain by waiting; so he waited, and gained everything. But in those long months in which he faced Howe on Long Island, then drew his troops away, gave up New York, slowly retreated through New Jersey, crossed the Delaware to the dismal winter camp at Valley Forge, while Congress, like the French Government in the early stages of the war, changed its abode to a safer city—in those long months, our ancestors knew an anxiety not less intense, and certainly more protracted, even than our own when the hosts of the greatest military organization of our times poured into defenseless Belgium and surged, apparently irresistible, over the fields of France. Except for Washington's brilliant dash from his covert and his rout of the Hessian troops at Trenton, nothing occurred for over fifteen months after Howe's landing on Long Island to interrupt the steadily accumulating apprehension of the final stroke of defeat—"nearer and nearer, though not yet." That was the controlling mood till the grandiose plan of Burgoyne ended with his surrender on October 17, 1777. Then, and not till then, could they cry, as we did after the Germans fled from Paris in the first battle of the Marne, "They're held!" And then and not till then could any American patriot have felt in his heart, "It is only a matter of time." For the alliance with France was now assured. Our country splendidly helped history to repeat itself, when in the summer of 1918

our boys did their part in staying the last and well-nigh successful advance of the foe, and, what is more, brought home to them at last our actual presence in the fight, backed by free-flowing resources, fresh strength, and a nation's steadfast will. From that moment, it was only a matter of time. We had paid our ancient debt to France. But the debt to our late allies, England and France and Italy, who had stemmed the tide while we were pondering, who had poured out their blood for civilization and for us, we have not begun to pay.

At the very darkest moment of the war, when Burgoyne was marching on after his initial victories, the courage of Washington shone brightest; then was his faith in the triumph of the righteous cause most strong. It was the same flame of heroism that leaped up in English hearts when its first hundred thousand were shot to pieces in the great retreat, the same that fired the will of France when the foe did not pass at Verdun, and the same that roused Italy to her true self when all seemed lost at Caporetto.

"Of wounds and sore defeat,
I made by battle-stay,
Wingéd sandals for my feet
I wove of my delay;
Of weariness and fear,
I made my shouting spear;
Of loss, and doubt and dread
And swift oncoming doom
I made a helmet for my head
And a floating plume.
From the shutting mist of death,
From the failure of the breath,
I made a battle-horn to blow
Across the vales of overthrow.
Oh, hearken, love, the battle-horn,
The triumph clear, the silver scorn!
Oh, hearken, where its echoes bring
Down the gray disastrous morn
Laughter and rallying."

Washington, in answer to the vainglorious proclamation of Burgoyne, published a manifesto to his troops which, as our author quotes it, began:

"The associated armies of America act from the noblest motives, and for the purest purposes; their common object is liberty. The same principles actuated the arms of Rome in the days of her glory, and the same object was the reward of Roman valour. When these sacred ideas are profaned, when the abominable mixture of mercenary, foreign, and savage forces dares to mention *the love of country, and the general privileges of mankind,* the freemen of America protest against such abuse of language and prostitution of sentiment. Harassed as we are by unrelenting persecution, obliged by every tie to repel violence by force, we appeal to the hearts of all mankind for the justice of our cause; its event we submit to him who speaks the fate of nations, in humble confidence, that as his omniscient eye taketh note even of the sparrow that falleth to the ground, so he will not withdraw his countenance from a people who humbly array themselves under his banner, in defence of the noblest principles with which he hath adorned humanity."

Did not our forefathers look back on the moment of that brave utterance, yes, on the whole period of the war, as to a Golden Age, when after the declaration of peace in 1783 a time of disillusion and despondency succeeded, a time most like to that in which we find ourselves just now? Peace had by no means brought with it either the general welfare of mankind or that of the States. The dangers of demobilization and of dissensions between the military and Congress were minimized by the wonderful tact of Washington. But other evils were rampant. Our own feeling of lassitude and frustration is not more intense than the national torpor of those days.

"Now sinks the public mind; a deathlike sleep
O'er all the torpid limbs begins to creep;
By dull degrees decays the vital heat,
The blood forgets to flow, the pulse to beat;
. . . . . .

Exposed in state, to wait the funeral hour,
Lie the pale relics of departed power;
While, conscience harrowing up their souls with dread,
Their ghost of empire stalks without a head."

These lines are from a contemporary poem which, as you will see, will greatly help us in our retrospect. It was written three years after the conclusion of peace.

Financial distress had not been alleviated by peace. Many men of wealth had been impoverished, and the profiteers had risen to their places. Rich and poor, united in the common cause during the war, drifted farther and farther apart. Luxury throve; for, as at the present day, it was sedulously cultivated by those who had not known it before. The reckless issuing of paper money increased speculation, divided debtors and creditors into hostile camps, and led to riots and organized plunder. A writer in a newspaper of the year 1786 remarks that the "friends of paper money may be reduced to the following classes: 1st, debtors; 2d, speculators; 3d, brokers; while its enemies are all *honest* lawyers, doctors, parsons, merchants, and farmers." In another paper we read: "The period of the late war was considered as the *paper age* of this country. We were told that it was to be succeeded by a *golden* one, after the peace. But, alas! peace is arrived, and the *paper age*—still remains."

No colony suffered more from these evils, self-imposed, than Rhode Island, or, as it was not infrequently called, "Rogues' Island."

"Hail! realm of rogues, renown'd for fraud and guile,
All hail! ye knav'ries of yon little isle.
There prowls the rascal, cloth'd with legal pow'r,
To snare the orphan, and the poor devour;
The crafty knave his creditor besets,
And advertising paper pays his debts;

. . . . . .

The wiser race, the snares of law to shun,
Like Lot of Sodom, from Rhode Island run."

I will reveal the identity of our poet in a moment, merely remarking now that he is not an inhabitant of Rhode Island.

General distress makes good soil for Bolshevism, and it throve in the years succeeding the war. By Bolshevism, I mean a social upheaval prompted mainly by a normal human desire to get something to eat; this is at least a good working definition of applied Bolshevism. In 1786, Captain Daniel Shays, a veteran of Bunker Hill, led such a movement in western Massachusetts. The urging motives were scarcity of money, business stagnation, heavy taxes, crushing debts, crazy financial schemes on the part of the State, and the feeling that the country had not treated its old soldiers with gratitude—precisely the motives that have driven the peasants over to the Reds in Russia today. Under the leadership of Shays, a mob closed the courts and prevented the collection of debts. One of the insurgents mounted a box and cried, "My boys, you are going to fight for liberty. If you wish to know what liberty is, I will tell you. It is for every man to do what he pleases, to make other folks do as you please to have them, and to keep folks from serving the devil." Save for the last clause, no orthodox Bolshevist could define his creed more nicely.

Shays' rebellion lasted over half a year and engaged the serious attention of Congress as well as of the State. Fully a third of the population of Massachusetts sympathized with the insurgents, and expressed their feelings when it came to the next elections; Governor Bowdoin, who had exerted every energy to suppress the revolt, was dropped from office. Our poet has some energetic lines on the unhappy episode, winding up with a postscript in prose in which he asks Massachusetts papers please to copy, or to quote his more stately language exactly, "The several printers in Massachusetts are requested to republish this, for the benefit of their kind customers." He appeals to Beelzebub to come over and help his faithful friends in our Macedonia (perhaps you can guess where that was), since his affairs are in so thriving a posture in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. In similar vein, a correspondent of the magazine in which our poet's work

appeared—I will name them both in a moment—proposed that the legislature pass a resolution in favor of one Peter Blacklegs and his associates, that they be exonerated from all their debts, and that "to the end that no subject of the State may hereafter be tempted to accumulate more wealth than his neighbor, *be it further enacted,* That when any subject of this State shall be suspected to have become rich by industry, frugality, and economy, twelve of his nearest neighbors shall assemble, and divide among them such overplus wealth as they may find he possesses. *Provided, always,* that the said twelve nearest neighbors are men who spend at least three days in the week at some tavern, and their expenses for distilled spirits have been for the last six months (next immediately preceding their being so called to sit as judges) equal to all their family expenses."

Finally I will quote from a letter sent by a gentleman in New York to a friend in Philadelphia, in 1786. The *paper money* bill, he declares, is an "inducement for people to refuse paying their debts, which many imagine was not altogether necessary. This operates as a general obstruction to business, which will not only prevent people fatiguing themselves too much, but will liberalize men's notions of property, and, in time, may bring back the apostolic practice of having all things in common. It will also take off our hearts and lessen our affections for this transitory world, the fashion whereof changeth; and further, verifies the proverb, that 'riches take to themselves wings and flee away,' and shows the particular pertinence of the wise man's question 'What good hath a man of all the labor wherewith he laboreth under the sun?'"

I make these many quotations to show first that our ancestors were perfectly familiar with a range of economic and political ideas that are proclaimed today as the last word of emancipated thought, and, more important still, that they knew how to treat such fallacies with penetrating Horatian satire, all the more effective because urbane. Open revolt, like that of the misguided Shays, they suppressed with a strong hand. But they would not have expelled from a

state or the national legislature regularly elected members, however radical their views. They did not try to assassinate a situation. Argument and Horatian satire were their instruments for humbling greedy politics masked with democratic zeal. Our poet celebrates a certain demagogue of the day under the name of William Wimble. He describes, somewhat prematurely, the hanging of this worthy, and gives what purports to be an elegy by his friend Tweedle, the poet laureate. It is entitled *"An Elegy on a Patriot,* occasioned by the awful and untimely Death of the Honorable William Wimble, who, by the coroner's inquest, was found to have come to his end by suffocation." Here is the picture of a true politician:

"To fellow-creatures he was kind,
To brethren, staunch and hearty;
He help'd the *weak,* and led the *blind,*
Whene'er he led his party.

. . . . . .

He shone in many an office fair,
By honorable seeking;
The Army, Church, and State, his care,
A Delegate and Deacon.

Adman, of Congress, asked thus:
'How comes it, *Poet Timbrel!*
Your State doth send a fool to us,
Whose name is William Wimble?'

The poet did this speech relate:
'From honest views we sent him;
The fools are many in our State—
He goes to represent 'em.'"

But besides the popular movements from below, the danger of political reaction was imminent, as it is in Germany at this moment. There was even a plan, favored by no less a person than Nathaniel Gorham of Massachusetts, President of Congress, to sound Prince Henry of Prussia,

brother of Frederick the Great, as to his willingness to ascend the new American throne; from Patrick Henry to Prince Henry had, indeed, been a far cry. Our poet, in scathing lines, proposes the establishment of a monarchy as meet punishment for the failure of the states to effect a soundly democratic union. For the states showed little disposition to fund their disagreements in a common policy. As with us at the present moment, the bond of supreme self-interest that had held the allied communities together during the war had snapped, and individual desires and suspicions became the more intense by contrast with the unity that had prevailed. Several states passed petty tariff, or octroi, laws at the expense of their neighbors. New York laid a heavy duty on butter, cheese, and garden vegetables coming from New Jersey, and on firewood from Connecticut. The paper currency had caused enormous differences in the rates of exchange and state credits. A report published in August, 1786, states that in Pennsylvania paper money was at ten per cent discount, in New Jersey at fifteen, in North Carolina at fifty, and in "Rogues'" Island at five hundred. The wiser states, like Connecticut and Pennsylvania, thus profited at the expense of their neighbors, who were roused to resentment rather than imitation. Maine thought seriously of forming an independent commonwealth in 1786, when Massachusetts was in the stress of revolution. Bickerings and petty jealousies were rife. Lewis Morris, father of Gouverneur Morris, the writer of the Constitution, drew up a will in which he "charges his executor to give his son the best education that is to be had in England or America, *outside of Connecticut*. The lad must never be sent to that colony, lest he imbibe in his youth 'that lowe craft and cunning so incident to the people of that country' which no art could disguise, although 'many of them under the sanctified garb of religion have endeavored to impose themselves on the world as honest men.'"

In short, the sacred fires of a united patriotism were spent. The whole sacrifice of the war was void. Those who had fought for their country were robbed of motive.

"This hateful truth still aggravates their pain,
In vain they conquer'd! and they bled in vain!"

The vision of independence, justice, and unity that had brightened the darkest days of the war seemed irretrievably to have vanished.

"Yet what the hope? The dreams of Congress fade,
The Federal UNION sinks in endless shade;
Each feeble call, that warns the realms around,
Seems the faint echo of a dying sound;
Each requisition wastes in fleeting air,
And not one State regards the powerless prayer."

Not much chance for a League of these tiny but most individualistic nations, when, as Senator Lodge puts it, the prevailing sentiment was a "miserable indifference to all things national," or, in the succinct language of our poet, it was the "fiends' millenial year."

I will now disclose the source whence I have drawn so many verses. It is a poem for which Yale College should be given the chief credit, as its composers were all graduates of Yale. They lived in Hartford, and were known as the Hartford wits; David Humphreys, Joel Barlow, John Trumbull, and Lemuel Hopkins were the members of this brilliant group, who made Connecticut in general and Hartford in particular the chief centre of American letters at that time. Boston, with its environs, had occupied that position once upon a time, and it was destined to recover it later. But there have been periods in the history of Boston, and its environs, in which, in the words of a modern wit of New York, it has assumed the character of an abandoned literary farm, sinking to the condition which Cotton Mather says had once justified the soubriquet of Lost-town. It was Lost-town again in the days of the Revolution. Creative literature, such as it was, came from New Haven.

In the *New Haven Gazette and Connecticut Magazine* for October 26, 1786, there appeared the first installment of a poem, the joint production of all the Hartford wits,

entitled *"The Anarchiad"—"Bolsheviad"* might be its name today. The authors professed to have discovered an ancient epic poem, antedating both Homer and Virgil, which contained in the manner of the sixth *Aeneid,* a panorama of future history, with particular reference to the period in American history immediately following the Revolution. They restored the text by means of a "chemic preparation," and proclaimed it "the model for all subsequent epic productions," and promised "perhaps, in a future essay," to prove that Homer, Virgil, Milton, and Pope had "borrowed many of their capital beauties from it." I think that Pope would have applauded the ingenuity of the idea, the general excellence of their verse and their imitation, and its parody of his own. Subscribers to the *New Haven Gazette* must have turned first of all in each new number to the latest deciphered fragment of the *Anarchiad.* Some innocent readers actually took it for Gospel truth. The successive productions were republished in a convenient little book by Luther G. Riggs at New Haven in 1861. He remarks that many of its passages are "peculiarly adapted to the exigencies of the present time"; they fit this moment, too.

Perhaps the most striking feature of this work, as I have already indicated, is its mastery of urbane Horatian ridicule, sometimes more sharply pointed in the manner of Mr. Pope. Through all this time when many heads were hot and some were lost, our Hartford wits cherish the golden mean and what I may perhaps call Yale indifference. Their light shines calmly in those murky days, like that of *Punch* through the recent war. If the votaries of the Comic Spirit keep the faith, no fury of uncreating Dullness can bring humanity, as it brought the German Empire, into utter void. And the Comic Spirit will not suffer us to eternize our enmities, to link our cause forever with that of the angels and that of our adversary forever with that of the adversary of all mankind. Memories of the bitter struggle were still keen when our authors, ridiculing the issue of paper money in one of the best of their parodies, could pay this tribute, seasoned, to be sure, with a pinch of satire, in honor of their recent foe:

"Lo, the poor Briton, who, corrupted, sold,
Sees God in courts, or hears him chink in gold;
Whose soul, proud empire oft has taught to stray
Far as the Western World, and gates of day;
Though plagu'd with debts, with rage of conquest curst,
In rags and tender-acts he puts no trust;
But in the public weal his own forgets,
Finds heaven for him who pays the nation's debts;
A heaven like London his fond fancy makes,
Of nectar'd porter and ambrosial steaks."

There is another flavor than that of satire in the closing couplet—an ill-concealed hankering for the coffee-house, in which our Hartford wits deserved a comfortable settle and a brimming tankard. These true Americans, though the bitterness of the war was still fresh, felt deep at heart the strength of their actual lineage. Surely if sedition had broken out in any part of Britain, they would not have fostered it by welcoming its envoys or raising subscriptions in its behalf. For all this, they were not Tories. They are the conservatives and aristocrats of the new American civilization, opposed equally to what they call the "giddy rage of democratic states," where are

"All souls reduc'd that e'er presum'd to shine,
To one just level,"

and they condemn no less those "years of darkness," whence

"springs the regal line—
Hereditary kings, by right divine."

They were members of the Order of the Cincinnati, formed of the officers who had served in the Revolutionary War and sharply criticized both at home and abroad as a breeder of caste and hereditary knighthood—an imaginary danger, in the opinion of our poets, and at all events less serious than some that threaten the American Legion today. In short, these Hartford wits are Federalists, and Alexander Hamilton is their prophet. Our culture would be richer, more varied and more liberal had their party preserved its lineage to the present time.

Amid the turmoil of dissension and distress with which the States were rife, it was no light task that faced the Constitutional Convention that assembled at Philadelphia in Independence Hall on the twenty-fifth of May, 1787. Yet there were giants in those days, strong men of ideas who, like true humanists in all periods of history, planned for the future by a study of the past. We must never forget that the founders of our American republic were men who venerated the Classics of Greece and Rome, who turned to antiquity no less than to modern France for guidance, and who conceived that their work, while embodying the new, kept faith with the best in tradition. The guiding intelligences of the convention were James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and Gouverneur Morris; of scarcely less note were Robert Morris, James Wilson, George Mason, and Roger Sherman. The political sagacity shown by these our forefathers makes one of the most lustrous pages in our history; taught by their studies of the past, they knew that an essential part of strength was the art of compromise. President Wilson, in his history of our country, declares that the convention drafted nothing less than a new constitution—no mere amendment or series of amendments to the Articles of Confederation, but a "radically new scheme of government and of union, which must stand or fall upon its own merits." Much of the strength of the appeal, I doubt not, was due to the insistence on the novel character of the plan. Madison was careful to point out that the term "national" was used not in contradistinction to a limited, but to a federal, goverment. It did not imply a consolidation of the individual governments; in short, it was a "new and unique" system that appropriated the good features of centralization without encroaching on State rights. As a matter of fact, the State governments were bound, as time went on, to become more and more secondary. Says Professor Channing: "It is safe to say that had this outcome been anticipated, had the state legislatures foreseen that the movement, in which they were asked to take part, would end in the loss of state sovereignty, and the establishment of a government

federal only in name, not one State would have accepted the invitation of Congress and appointed delegates." And Senator Lodge states, in his Life of Daniel Webster, that in 1788, "not a man in the country regarded the new system as anything but an experiment—from which each and every State had the right peaceably to withdraw." This statement has not been universally conceded by historians, but Senator Lodge has at least made it indisputably clear that our forefathers were willing to undertake an exceedingly novel political experiment, an exceedingly wide divagation from their ancestral ways. They felt, to quote Mr. Lodge's later, though not his latest, words, in his discussion of a League to Enforce Peace, that "it is through the aspiration for perfection, through the search for Utopias, that the real advances have been made." During the Convention, Washington adhered firmly, through all the discouragements, to his *Utopian* dream. "It is too probable," he admitted, "that no plan we propose will be adopted. Perhaps another dreadful conflict is to be sustained. If, to please the people, we offer what we ourselves disapprove, how can we afterwards defend our work? Let us raise a standard to which the wise and honest can repair. The event is in the hand of God." I can well believe that these words may have cheered the heart of President Wilson in moments that would dispirit a more flexible mind.

But the delegates at Philadelphia were sagacious in their mode of presentation. They did not hand out to the different States a sort of Westminster Confession, immutable and indispensable for their salvation, with a direction to "Sign here" and not to tear out the heart of the document by tinkering with its clauses; rather, they invited them in a large and general way to partake of a unique political venture, in which they had nothing to lose and everything to gain. They admitted the imperfections of their plan. Washington wrote after the event to Patrick Henry: "I wish the Constitution, which is offered, had been more perfect; but I sincerely believe it is the best that could be obtained at this time, and as a constitutional door is opened for amendments

hereafter, the adoption of it under the present circumstances of the Union, is, in my opinion, desirable."

Such was the modesty of the greatest American and such his wisdom. The late Cecil Chesterton, brother of the better known Gilbert Chesterton and quite his peer in acute observation and trenchant phrase, hit the truth when he remarked in his history of our country, that the framers of the Constitution "made an alliance and hoped it would grow into a nation." Such was the strategy and such the result. Only three years after the adoption of the Constitution, Alexander Hamilton, then Secretary of the Treasury under the first President, proposed and, despite opposition, carried through, a measure which if brought forward when the Constitution was submitted to the States, would have wrecked the whole plan of union; I mean the consolidation of the State debts in one national debt. One thing at a time. Of Hamilton, President Wilson says, with a courtesy that comes well from a Jeffersonian, "that he was above all a statesman, and contented himself, and that right heartily, with the minimum of what he desired—with the government that the convention desired. He knew by how delicate and difficult a series of compromises the Constitution as it stood had been obtained amidst a conflict of interests and of views disclosed in debate. A compromise had ended every serious divergence of opinion." Would that this admirable definition of a statesman as one who understands the art of compromise commanded universal acceptance at this moment! Alas, it is sometimes easier to hold up the mirror of history for the gaze of our contemporaries than to look therein ourselves.

Statesmanlike as the new document was, it by no means won immediate approval. Richard Henry Lee of Virginia, almost anticipating the words of Senator Lodge, thought that such a "compleat consolidating plan" deserved to be "carefully considered by every American," because if it proved to be impracticable, its adoption would be a fatal error. Patrick Henry came out with a new demand for liberty or death, only that the instrument of death now

seemed to be the proposed constitution. "That this is a consolidated government," he declared, "is demonstrably clear; and the danger of such a government is, to my mind, very striking. What right had they to say, *We, the people?* Who authorized them to speak the language of, *We, the people,* instead of, *We, the States?* States are the characteristics and the soul of a confederation. If the States be not the agents of this compact, it must be one great, consolidated, national government of the people of all the States." Patrick Henry's analysis was correct, but the outcome does not impress us today as particularly alarming. Henry was not the only protestant. Samuel Adams in Massachusetts and George Clinton in New York were quite as emphatic in their opposition. Indeed, President Wilson, who, so far as I have observed, nowhere brands these opponents as traitors, believes that "could there have been a counting of heads the country through, a majority would have been found opposed to the Constitution." Sometimes a plebiscite is a dangerous thing.

No wonder, therefore, that though the Constitution had been perfected in the short space of four months, being signed by the delegates on September 17, 1787, it took some time for the States to ratify. Most of the smaller ones were quick to "come under the New Roof," as the phrase went, but the interests of the larger States demanded more consideration. Delaware, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey ratified towards the end of the year, with Georgia and Connecticut close behind them. Massachusetts agreed, but only with the understanding that certain amendments should be made as soon as practicable. That was the attitude likewise of Virginia, North and South Carolina, New York and New Hampshire. These amendments, which had been virtually guaranteed by the representatives in the convention, constituted a sort of bill of rights, and, remarks President Wilson, had they not been accepted, "the opposition would have prevailed." They appear as Amendments 1 to 10 in the Constitution of the U. S. A., and their purpose, as defined by President Wilson, was to safeguard explicitly

the more essential rights of individuals and of States. They are apparently no great obstacle today to a firmly knit American nationality. With the assent of New Hampshire, that of New York, thus placed between two large communities that had accepted, became inevitable, and Virginia reasoned in like manner. North Carolina jumped aboard after the inauguration of President Washington in 1789, and little Rhode Island, with the same spirit of independence that she is showing perhaps more justifiably today, was the last to ratify, on May 29, 1790. Like Virgil's bees, that sturdy community

"Carries large courage in a tiny breast."

In the fragment of the *Anarchiad* that appeared in the *Gazette* for May 24, 1787, the day before the Convention opened, these verses occur; the speaker is Hesper, spirit of the Western World:

"When splendid victory, on her trophy'd car
Swept from these shores the last remains of war—
Bade each glad State that boasts Columbia's name,
Exult in freedom and ascend to fame;
To bliss unbounded stretch their ardent eyes,
And wealth and empire from their labor rise—
My raptur'd sons beheld the discord cease,
And sooth'd their sorrows in the songs of peace.
Shall these bright scenes, with happiest omens born,
Fade like the fleeting visions of the morn?
Shall this fair fabric from its base be hurl'd,
And whelm in dust the glories of the world?
Will ye, who saw the heavens tempestuous lower—
Who felt the arm of irritated power—
Whose souls, descending with the wasting flood,
Prepar'd the firm foundations, built in blood;
By discord seiz'd, will ye desert the plan—
Th' unfinish'd Babel of the bliss of man?

. . . . . .

Ere death invades, and night's deep curtain falls,
Through ruined realms the voice of UNION calls;

. . . . . .

On you she calls! attend the warning cry:
'YE LIVE UNITED, OR DIVIDED DIE!' "

This call was heard, and the people of discordant States were joined in one nation. Union did not usher in the millenium, which has not yet arrived. Why should it come? It is the period that may be perpetually defined as that which lies a thousand years ahead of any given moment; as such, may it ever inspire humanity to higher hopes and deeds. Our country today is seething as of yore with new forms of the frailties with which we are so easily beset. But some of the wrongs and the fears that stalked abroad in the dark years following the Revolution have long since been laid.

I will return, in closing, to our anonymous chronicler of our ancestors' war. Looking back from the year 1793 on that not distant past, he writes with a cheerful tranquillity, as though its dangers had been surmounted, and its gains conserved. "The smiles of Heaven on the American Revolution," he declares, "must be confessed by all who have paid attention to the events. The following have been noticed as remarkable: The fewness of apostasies in the capital characters; the fewness of desertions to the enemy; the sailors taken in the American service have preferred the horrors of prison-ship to fighting against the country who had employed them; men of every rank have generally felt and spoke alike, as if the chords of life struck unison through the continent."

So then, after the intervening years of discord and disillusion, the vision had returned. It is therefore too soon for us to despair. As history repeats herself for us at this moment, bringing the old question in an issue of still greater scope, we may turn for encouragement to those earlier days of retrospect. We may, like our ancestors, rise above the "prevailing sentiment of a miserable indifference in regard to all things" *inter*national. We may still cherish the great

ideal and anticipate the coming again of those golden days when hearts were united and hopes ran high, and when the triumph over injustice in a splendid war seemed but the precursor to a yet more splendid era when the need of war should have ceased to plague our poor humanity. And if we would steer our course by undefiled American ideals, if we would keep the faith of our fathers and truly venerate the Constitution on which our American commonwealth is built, we shall consider not merely the letter of that great document itself, but even more attentively the aims and spirit of the men who framed it. For it is the letter that killeth, but the spirit that giveth life. Thus we may listen again to the voice of our country calling from the past and uniting in the old appeal with new voices from across the sea:

> "On you she calls! attend the warning cry:
> 'Ye live united, or divided die!' "

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